

6-17-12 Status Quo?

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K was trying to change the status of West Berlin, but more generally, to maintain the status of East Germany and East Europe—safe from the threat of NATO intervention in support of uprisings there or opposition to repressions by the Soviet army—by maintaining the status quo of a divided Germany, accepted by both superpowers, with each side integrated into an alliance system and incapable of independent action, without independent control of nuclear weapons (although US control of nuclear weapons in Germany was only nominal). (Trachtenberg; Reifer).

The US had “legal rights” to have troops in Berlin; and the Soviets had legal right, given concurrence by Cuba (fearing US illegal intervention) to have troops and missiles in Cuba.

Otherwise, each was an “abnormal” situation: an island allied to one superpower, in an ideologically and militarily hostile sea controlled by the other. Locally, for each, “right” was in contradiction to conventional “might.” The counterweight—maintaining “rights” in the face of locally-overwhelming conventional might—was the threat of escalation to all-out nuclear war, in the case of NATO and Berlin.

Khrushchev attempted to create the same “deterrent-defense” for his ally. Had he been successful, he might well have used his audacious success to achieve his aims for Berlin (though that’s not clear; and how that might have come out is not clear either). He was thrown back; but Castro is still there. (Was there ever again contingency planning for invasion of Cuba at the same pitch as in the fall of 1962?)

6/16/12 3:32 PM
US pro-prolif

The example of the US in the nuclear era provides a strong encouragement to other nations to acquire nuclear weapons, and an irresistible encouragement *to use them in the way that the US has and still does*: in external relations, for *threatening*, threatening first-use as well as retaliation or escalation.

However useful actual nuclear attacks might be militarily against a non-nuclear power unallied to a nuclear state (like Japan in WWII or the Soviet Union in the first four years afterwards), their main use has been for threats. Nuclear attacks, whether first or second, against a nuclear weapons state are virtually suicidal and have never yet occurred. First-use *threats* against an actual nuclear weapons state are difficult—though not impossible—to make credible, and have been relatively rare. (The Berlin Crises of 1958-62 and the Cuban Missile Crisis are the main examples). None has yet been carried out, though these examples did come close.

The main use of nuclear weapons by the US has been to make tactical first-use threats against non-nuclear states that are allies of the SU or China. (For a variety of reasons, none of those have been carried out either: because the threat was successful, or because it wasn't needed, or because the threatener backed down.) To make those credible (enough), it's necessary for the US to deter—or to make it plausible that it believes it can deter—the SU, or later China, from responding to that attack on its ally with a nuclear reprisal somewhere.

The US felt a need during the Cold War to make the Soviets fear that such a “second-use” might lead the US to escalate the conflict to an attack on the Soviet Union itself. And that fear would only seem warranted if the US had reason to believe that it could disarm the SU to such an extent by such an escalation that it would not suffer unacceptable damage at home. This has been the main internal rationale--though unacknowledged to the public--for acquiring counterforce capabilities to attack Soviet air-bases and hardened missile silos, sub pens and command centers.

Thus US strategic forces have been sized and shaped---during the Cold War--primarily to accomplish a preemptive or escalatory first-strike mission against the SU, to support the credibility of first-use threats of tactical (short-range) nuclear weapons against non-nuclear allies of the SU (or the SU itself, in Berlin and Europe), who might oppose US military efforts to suppress an armed challenge to pro-US regimes in the Third World.

The aim of the linked tactical and strategic nuclear weapons is to help maintain the status quo in Germany and West Europe and in the “Free World” (mainly Third World pro-American dictatorships).

The same is true of the Soviet tactical and strategic nuclear weapons, with respect to their sphere in East Europe. (None of their more distant allies, like North Korea or North Vietnam, faced a significant threat of conventional warfare that might require a Soviet first-use nuclear threat to counter it. Cuba was the exception to this.) In other words, the main purpose of these weapons is seen on each side as defensive or conservative of a status quo: not in the first instance defending the homeland so much as *defending a sphere of influence and interest* (an “informal” or indirect empire) from erosion or incursion.

In both cases, the need to prop up unpopular dictatorships against popular or nationalist uprisings that might win support from the superpower adversary led to the need both for tactical nuclear weapons and strategic counterforce weapons (in which the Soviets were deficient in 1962, leading subsequently to an uncontrolled and largely unnecessary, costly and dangerous nuclear buildup, matched by the US).

Each claimed its nuclear posture was necessary to deter or defeat unprovoked aggression by the other; the other’s aggressive military effort to *expand* its sphere of influence or hegemony. Such expansion (“roll-back”) into the other’s sphere was possible and hoped for by each superpower, but only opportunistically, exploiting instability on the periphery of that sphere that it might or might not have exacerbated but which might erupt at any time without such external encouragement because of local resentment of an unpopular, foreign-imposed regime.

That was possible in South Vietnam, Central and South America, and East Europe. (Desires for unification of a divided country were also important factors in Germany and Vietnam). But the driving force in each superpower was to maintain and defend a sphere, not to expand it. (In the case of Cuba, America didn’t accept the legitimacy of its “loss” of (influence and investment in) Cuba, and intended to “restore” a sphere, the one case where real “roll-back” was intended and attempted. Khrushchev attempted to maintain the new status quo of a Soviet-oriented, Communistic state that had recently left—or been expelled from—the American/OAS sphere).

Even so, the shadow-boxing of threat and counterthreat led to maneuvers and alerts—and to a mental set of planning, training and organization in its armed forces—that could well have brought about a war: in much the same way that WW I came about, after decades of “crises,” threats, planning and secret alliances) with even more catastrophic effect.

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Friday, March 13, 2015
See Ukraine now.

6/16/12 3:32 PM

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Saturday, May 12, 12
 ÇUBA II\ON MY FILES (89-91)

Not a military crisis, but a political crisis: especially, but not entirely, because of the President's warning and commitment earlier. (That was, after all, a response to the Republican pressure and response to the Soviet overt buildup

I conjecture: In C-II, from very early on, the president wants to "do something risky, illegal, (necessarily, controversial politically) and military and warlike—the blockade—and he wants **not** to do more than that (actually sink ships or subs, not attack, not invade), but he does want to **threaten** to do more, both to affect the terms of resolving the crisis and to keep the JCS and right-wing (including Dems in Congress!) off his back while he bargains.

The threats lead to measures to increase their credibility, which both lessen the chance that they will be defied (challenging them to be carried out) and increase the chance that under some circumstances they **will** be carried (even if the president intended earlier never to carry them out—not foreseeing the actual environment of pressure and threat he might face—and even though the opponent did not mean ultimately to defy them but only to threaten that he would, in order to improve the terms of a trade he was resigned to making).

JFK tightens the blockade and makes new threats, and goes on alert; K (does not challenge the blockade with military ships, but) orders the missile construction to proceed on a crash basis. (Why? After he has decided to give them up, and after JFK has repeatedly demanded that work be halted. Hyp: he wants to bargain over terms with **all** the missiles operational, making an attack still more unlikely and less of a credible threat for JFK: although this didn't slow down the JCS! And did increase their pressure on JFK.)

[What was going on in the Tank? They must have seen this as a Perfect Failure as much as the Bay of Pigs: in failing to take advantage of an unprecedented opportunity to justify an attack, which they were unprecedentedly ready to carry out, with total expectation of success (! Vs. Nitze and Rusk, Oct. 15, or McCone) (if only one/they ignored the risk of triggering an operational missile! Or sub torpedo! Or tac nucs!) Treason. Cowardice. Foolishness. "This man has got to go!"

The Chiefs look like maniacs. (Even more than in VN, or Bay of Pigs, or Laos, or Berlin. With "responsible" members of Congress ready to back them, at least, "at first thought.")

Consider what McG B knew (and what he didn't know) that he didn't want me to find out: in responding to my request for participation in my study!

Tuesday, September 13, 2011
8:07 AM

\C-II\McNamara & C-II

(Saturday, October 8, 2011) This relates to The Silence of the Doves, and their reasons for persisting in it, sometimes even after retirement, to their deaths; a lifelong silence) (Note that nothing was seen as so “sensitive”—to be concealed and lied about—as dovish moves: Stevenson’s proposals on Oct. 20, McNamara and JFK and Rusk agreement with them (as later moves) even earlier, and later, JFK’s agreement with them on Oct. 27, apparent RFK proposal of them to Dobrynin on Oct. 25 as well as proposal of covert trade on Oct. 27, JFK preparation to accept them on Oct. 27 (Rusk-Cordier-U Thant). RFK’s ultimatums were also concealed (even from ExComm), but the main one was a bluff! (hence secret from ExComm: because JFK wasn’t going to carry it out!)

And McNamara’s denial of lying and of personal responsibility:

9-13-11: (Reactions to Blight and Lang, Fog of War)

Having read only a few pages of Fog of War, I predict that B-L—despite creditable and careful exploration of “what if” and “might have been” and, within limits, McNamara’s limitations as decision-maker and retrospective “teacher of lessons”—will NOT bring out, here any more than any of their other books and collaborations with McNamara:

1) His readiness to lie to the Congress and public (and military: see Skybolt! And allies: FU!), either obediently to a boss, or for tactical reasons, or to protect his own image and his self-image (as a non-liar, in particular), or to pursue a policy, or to protect a boss (president); or any examples of these lies;

2) His unwillingness to acknowledge, to others or, apparently, to himself, that he was ever ready to lie, or had ever done so, or any specific case of this;

With the one exception below, he never mentions a lie, or readiness to lie, by a president or any other official. In court, he defends Westmoreland (correctly, I believe) against the CBS charge that he had lied to the president (without mentioning that Westmoreland, along with McNamara and the president, had frequently lied to the public and Congress).

3) His unwillingness (under pressure!) to express any criticism of his boss, a president; any criticism (except in Canada!) of any president or his policy; any disagreement he had with a president he served, any difference of opinion or values (with the exception of one occasion when LBJ ordered him to lie, against his own better judgment of the situation: the budget projection, in 1965);

4) His unwillingness to acknowledge, or speculate about or explore, any possible *moral* culpability or shortcoming or immoral decision or values/priorities, in himself or any other American decision-maker.

(Hanoi decision-makers, yes! “How could you have risked our further bombing, or nuclear weapons, instead of accepting our offers?! Didn’t you care about your own people?”).

Cognitive failures, yes: “We were wrong...to believe (in the domino theory)...to take worst-case possibility (of SU missiles: lie for fall of 1961)...we didn’t realize...(Hanoi willingness to postpone takeover, lack of intent to invade all of SEA)...

5) His unwillingness to accept—or to talk about, discuss—*any* degree of responsibility for the Vietnam war. “The president was responsible.” (This conflicts with (3) above: but he engages in no specifics: see (3) on failure to mention any divergence of opinion between him and a president.

(He does, eventually, mention a difference between the two presidents, with respect to JFK’s unwillingness to make the war American and the unlikelihood that he would have done so: very tersely, bottom line, no specifics; and he mentions that he *agreed* with JFK in 1963, never that he might have **disagreed**, if he did, with LBJ).

I see these several forms of reticence as reflecting two character traits of McNamara and a particular special interest.

(a) The role, self-image, identity, persona of a loyal knight, a baron, a feudal loyalty to the king; a readiness and desire to fulfill that role, and to be seen as doing so (thus, like other officials, an availability to be tapped for that role—“Arise, sir knight”—by future kings; and continued membership in “the president’s men,” the club (of “honorable men,” like CIA covert operatives), the ranks of the trustworthy, the faithful, the reliables, the insiders, (including those who work for very rich men, the owners: Henry Ford, Rockefeller (McCloy, Kissinger), the Kennedys (note his, and others’ rallying around Ted Kennedy at Chappaquiddick, like Milt Gwirtzman).

Also, not only for JFK and LBJ, but for George W. Bush over Iraq (earlier, Nixon), he acts as *a protector of the mystique of the presidency*, the “infallibility” (see HR Haldeman, on what the Pentagon Papers undermined) and impossibility of doing wrong, as well as being wrong .

(He insists that a loyal knight, a former official, must uphold this and refrain from opposing the policies of a president once he himself has left office. He makes the absurdly illogical claim that a willingness to criticize the policy of any president in wartime “would endanger the lives of troops” (quote exchange with Morris, in B-L): when it is virtually self-evident that it is the *failure* to criticize publicly, from an

authoritative and insider's perspective, that has cost the lives of troops and is endangering many more).

(Does he mean that it would undermine the *morale* of the troops, to suggest they are being wrongly or unnecessarily used and risked? "Support the troops" (= "support the president")? But at worst (as claimed in Iraq and Afghanistan) their lowered morale doesn't risk their lives; their continued presence in combat does that, which the criticism might terminate!

(b) A peculiar refusal (denial) to acknowledge his conscious acceptance of the need for *lying*, its necessity and justification, something he acted on easily and often, for a wide variety of motives. (Peculiar given, on the one hand, the ease with which he could have justified this to others, as he obviously did to himself; and on the other, given the necessity he did acknowledge to Morris of the "evil"—a lesser, necessary evil, but still both evil and criminal (arguable, given its necessity to prevent a greater evil, or "to do good": a distinction he doesn't make explicitly)—of *mass murder* of innocents in the form of the firebombing of Tokyo and other Japanese cities.

He can explicitly imagine being tried as a war criminal (over Tokyo, not Vietnam), for a *crime against humanity* (true!); but will not acknowledge that he could be criticized for lying, which he did all the time, without any qualms, for reasons ranging from well-founded reasons of state to self-serving convenience. He acts, oddly, as if the latter would be harder to justify, more problematic, than mass murder.

Put the above two together: Would he ever lie *to a president*? Well, he seems to have *concealed* from LBJ for over three years **JFK's intentions on Vietnam—and his agreement with them!**—and then, for two years (late fall 1965 to late fall 1967) his **opinion that continuation of the war was hopeless and not worthwhile, and that they should negotiate with the NLF and accept a coalition government.** This reticence involved at best a lot of misleading statements, as well as silence, and really, lies.

He certainly never acknowledges this, and I suspect, he would have denied any intent or even capability to do this, to himself as well as others.

c) His special interest, which he shared with all his colleagues and which would have a very strong influence on anyone in his historical position: in denying *any* personal responsibility for the disaster of Vietnam. He never comes out and says explicitly, "I had no responsibility whatever." He refuses, explicitly, to answer the question about his possible responsibility; and he implicitly answers it with his "it's the president's responsibility; he's the one elected; we have one president at a time (so I/we had no choice but to obey: see (a) above, vs. oath to the Constitution).

The incentive to deny *to himself this* culpability, as Secretary of Defense during "McNamara's war" is very great indeed. (His acceptance of that description at the time was one more instance of his loyalty, his shouldering the blame for his boss: not

acknowledging it to himself. (In the Tokyo bombing case, he was *obviously* a low-level participant: easier to acknowledge a role.)

I suspect that after, say, 1967, his own awareness of the catastrophe he had been a major actor in inflicting on Vietnam and the country (though, how much did he really care about the Vietnamese? I don't now. He's never shown much evidence of it, except in his protest to the Hanoi leaders about their callousness!), meant that he had an understandably great need to ward off feelings of personal guilt. And I believe he *did* so, effectively, by his conscious extreme valuation of "loyalty" to the president/boss (and his revulsion against my disloyalty to him) and the unthinkable of disobeying him, exposing him, opposing him: given the president's sole authority, his sole responsibility.

If he were to admit that what *I* did was legitimate, a choice for him and other officials, even possibly obligatory given views that he and I shared (!), and that it might have ended the war (with incomparably greater likelihood than anything I or almost anyone else could have done), then the feeling of his personal responsibility for the wasted lives and disrupted societies would indeed have been unbearably crushing, even if his share of responsibility would have remained less than LBJ's. In other words, his incentive to deny this to himself (and others) and to resist coming to accept it was unusually great.

I'm suggesting that these historical and personal circumstances strongly reinforced after 1967-68 his earlier characterological inclination to regard loyalty to a president as the highest, virtually absolute value. But this (along with his unwillingness to recognize secrecy of policy and *official lying*, by himself and all other officials, as a factor in decision-making and especially in the construction of catastrophes) strongly **undercuts his (unusual, and sincere) desire to learn lessons from experience and to teach them. And it strongly limits the value and reliability of the lessons he does convey, or that others (like Blight and Lang) draw from his testimony.**

Having said all this, it is worth emphasizing that he remains virtually the only official, high or low, in any administration who has said "We were wrong, *I was wrong*," about Vietnam *or anything else*! (I do give him credit for saying this—especially, in the face of the criticism it evoked, with respect to his failure to resign or to reveal this earlier--even though his publisher Peter Osnos told me that he had very resistant to saying it, and had yielded only because, Osnos claims, they were unwilling to publish the book if he didn't.) Virtually everyone (except Cheney; Bush? Rumsfeld?) recognizes that "mistakes were made" in Iraq. But has one single official acknowledged making one of them?! (I think B-L make this point, rightly so). Has any other official said that about Vietnam?

About the nuclear arms race? (Herb York). (On this, McNamara does not acknowledge his own role—which was indeed against his personal beliefs, from the beginning!—except to say, falsely, that they were still acting on "worst-case fears" in the fall of 1961. And that "mistakes" (cognitive) were made in Cuba-II.)

9:53 AM, 1693 words

10:39 AM

B-L themselves never press McNamara on these limits: because their whole careers came to be based on their relationship with McNamara, his collaboration with them (interviews, conferences, joint authorship), which would have ended had they pressed on these particular issues. (Did this book come out while he was still alive? They don't allow themselves comments on these matters, still. When I told them how often he lied, even to them, with specifics—SEE MY FILE LISTING MCNAMARA'S CONTINUED LIES-- they seemed surprised and distressed, and resistant: a not-uncommon naivete among political scientists, especially with respect to their own oral sources, but still, self-serving). Likewise, Morris, who was afraid that McNamara would terminate their interviews for the Fog of War. (Danner, really pressing him on these precise points at Berkeley, simply gets no answer.)

Some reasons why McNamara preferred, as he said to Errol Morris, to be "damned if he didn't" (explain certain things):

(1) The way he was treated for his admissions of error in In Retrospect would not encourage either him or anyone else to come clean in public in that fashion.

One question or charge almost any whistleblower risks facing when they expose wrong-doing of which they were aware or in which they had participated is: "When did you become aware of this? Why didn't you warn us about it earlier? Why didn't you do more to resist it, earlier?" The WB is revealing "guilty knowledge."

(See Sam Provance, literally criminally charged with having withheld knowledge of he torture prior to the time he, almost alone, exposed it! In one form or another, that's common!

Moreover, there's the prospect of retaliation by those exposed—not only the president, but others who participated and who could have resisted and exposed but did not—by bringing other charges against the WB. (See Tom Drake). So all the others get defensive and retaliate, too.

(See the conspiracy, led by Robert Kerrey, of all his subordinates to agree on his false cover story about the massacre, for fear of prosecution. Or all the cover-ups. And the attacks on Gerhart...

Moreover, there is the charge not only of disloyalty to the president, the boss, the team, but of trying—perhaps falsely, or in an exaggerated fashion—to shift blame from oneself to the president (especially when the truth is, the message is, that the president was mainly responsible—as McNamara actually feels, with reason—not only because of his role and authority but because the WB disagreed with the president.

Would McNamara—he probably felt—even have been believed, when he told the truth about his disagreement? He would risk being seen not only as disloyal, but as a liar (which he so often was—though not in this case!) which was his worst nightmare, the

charge to which he was so oddly super-sensitive; and as self-serving: a self-serving, disloyal liar! He would rather be damned for his silence (though it precluded sound lesson-learning, sound understanding and explanation; and amounted to misleading communication in itself, ambiguous but prone to being misunderstood) than to be damned for telling the truth, this truth!

The charge *was* made against him: Why didn't you resign, when (you now admit) you perceived the strategy and the war were hopeless?

Actually, he had an answer for that ("It would have been a one-day story, no effect"), though he usually declined to give it.

"Why didn't you speak out against the war, after you left?" (See his stupid answer, above, backed up by his ideology of loyalty to "the presidency.")

But no one did press him: "Why didn't you do—either before you left, or after—what DE did? With documents?" That possibility doesn't really occur to the official, or to others, even journalists: even after my example. 11:05 AM 611 words

For years, I felt I couldn't answer the question, "How should wars like this be averted or shortened?" by saying, "officials who know better should do what I did." It sounded to me too self-serving, self-congratulating and also attributing implausible efficacy to what I did. Yet it always seemed important to find a way to say that officials who foresee disaster should do more than "resign," the usual challenge.

Finally I realized that a way to convey this message was to talk about what I *should* have done, but did not do, in 1964-65. This has the drawback about suggesting that I feel undue (even unwholesome, pathological) guilt about my silence then; and that I acted out of guilt later.

Sunday, April 22, 12 [I could have said —and still can—"They should do what I did in March, 1968." (And Bradley Manning)]

(Actually, as Patricia once said when I commented that the latter inference was untrue, "You should feel more guilt than you do." True, up to a point: recognizing, as I do put it, that my failure to be more critical of the premises of what we were doing, and my failure to think of how I could do more (the PP), "do not let me off the hook." Still, ignorance is an excuse, up to a point; I should have felt more guilty than I did, but not as guilty as listeners often suppose that I did and do.

There is little tendency even for radicals (who don't think much about the existence of dissenters within the bureaucracy or the ruling class, or about what they might or ought to do) or for others to even to consider the possibility that a dissenting official might become a whistleblower (with documents! A Bradley Manning!) and subsequent active resister to the ongoing policy (like me. Or like "post-retirement, post-access whistleblowers, Clarke, Wilkerson, Wright, Rowley...)

If there were more awareness of this possibility—which I try to convey—then one could distinguish levels of responsibility (circles of hell?) among those who come to perceive the wrongness of an ongoing policy:

--those who fail to perceive this possibility (despite, say, the example of me, or Manning or other WB's;

--those who should have perceived it earlier (Speer's self-indictment, whether or not this constituted his deceptive "copping a plea"; me; nearly every official, every WB);

--those who perceive it, but don't act on it even internally (largest category);

--those who act on it internally—speaking truth to power, inside—but don't resign (or leak, anonymously), do implement the policy (Clifford, Ball, Humphrey, Hughes, Bill Bundy, JTM: Silence—to outsiders—of the Doves;

--those who resign but don't expose or resist (Moyers, Ball eventually, McGeorge Bundy to some extent, Holbrooke;

--those who expose, without documents; but don't become activists in opposition;

--those who do oppose after resigning, though without exposing (William Jennings Bryan, in WWI; McNamara on nuclear arms race; Schlesinger, Jr., Goodwin, on Vietnam; **(Ramsey Clark)**

**[Outside Hell, or purgatory, circles of whistleblowing]
Sunday, April 22, 12**

--those who resign and expose, but without documents (Hoh, Drake, Binney, Wright, etc. Ray McGovern and VIPS, Sibel and NSWBC, Morris, MHH; Clarke

--those who leave and resist, but without exposing (or documents) Clifford, Warnke

--Anonymous WBs who mean to stay in, with or without docs: (Drake, Tamm, Radack, anon...(me in 1968) (MHH, on Cambodian bombing?) 206,000

--those who leave and expose, but with old documents (me, PP)

Best (no one?): Try to stay in and testify, leak current documents in testimony or after being fired (OR leak scads of current documents, high-level (Could have: me in 1964, Drake, Powell/CoS, Clarke, Holbrooke, Eikenberry (close), McNamara, ICG (Shultz, Weinberger), William Jennings Bryan, VN doves (Ball, Hughes, Humphrey, ... NSA leakers;

What should we ask of our officials, when they privately dissent?

What values and behavior should we suggest to our children, for their future functioning in large organizations? For sheer career advancement, “to get along, go along” is very sound. McNamara’s *feudal* values are personally safest (in the American empire; and in corporations, although unlike the government, there is increasing opportunity to shift from one to another without fatal charges of disloyalty).

Yet there is a challenge of a peculiarly *American* form of patriotism, with loyalty to our Constitution (as written and amended) and to the country above loyalty to a particular president, boss, agency, party. Many Americans, and most officials, don’t recognize that—their values are not really distinguishable from those in an openly authoritarian regime—and won’t appreciate your children’s acting on that, but others still do, in America.

It is possible to act in the interests of larger constituencies than one’s own department or agency, the incumbent administration or presidency, one’s own party. It is possible to do so *by exposing lies with documents and testimony* and helping mobilize or joining active opposition to the policies of one’s erstwhile “team.”

And the power of telling truths to outsiders that have been wrongly concealed can be enormous, even for an individual who does not personally wield great authority inside. The personal costs can be (even probably will be) great, but the possible benefits—to the country, to “others”—can be incalculably large.

It can be legitimate, right, even morally compelling, to do this, even though it involves breaking a promise of secrecy, breaching “trust,” being charged with disloyalty and possibly (rightly or wrongly) with illegality, almost surely damaging or losing one’s career, losing many friends (even, marriage: under economic pressure).

That’s what I wanted to convey to my own children, by letting them see me at work copying top secret documents.

Indeed, it’s hard for me to believe that our species will survive without much more “civil courage” than we have seen, including this personally costly truth-telling from insiders.

[from 9-13-11 McN lies and responsibility: originally titled, McN VN & C-II]
C-II

JFK and K (Khrushchev) were each determined not to let the crisis become war. Yet by their bargaining tactics, their postponing revealing their willingness to settle (on terms acceptable to the other), their ignorance of the limits on their own and the other's ability to control their own forces (their subordinates' and their allies'), they came perilously close, extremely close, to waging war.

K knew, Saturday night, just how close (and how fast he had to act to forestall it). JFK did not, Saturday night or ever in the next year of his life; nor did RFK in his lifetime; nor McNamara, or any other member of the ExComm, for twenty-five years! Nor did they know why Khrushchev had folded as and when he did; or thus, why the crisis had ended as it did, or why JFK had "won." Their guesses, in ignorance, were all wrong.

And even after the twenty-five years, after 1987, virtually no written accounts have it right: in the way that Khrushchev could have explained it, and the way I will. Which means the "lessons learned" have been wrong, unfounded, mistaken. And the dangers of the nuclear age, which persist, have been and are greatly underrated.

Yes, as B-L infer and quote others, JFK did learn relevant lessons from C-I, the Bay of Pigs, which reduced the risks of his management of the crisis: but not enough to have kept him from skating to the very brink of catastrophe, without knowing it.

The same is true of his willingness to compromise: to give assurances of non-invasion, to offer a covert deal on the Turkish missiles, even secretly to be ready to make an overt deal: which would have meant a "win" for K, a loss for him (possibly even impeachment; almost certainly, loss of the 1964 election and even great losses in Congress in 1962). None of these, given his actual behavior (in ignorance of Khrushchev's actions and his lack of control of Cuban antiaircraft) prevented the near-explosion.

Nor, without Khrushchev's secret, reckless lack of control of Soviet nuclear missiles and Cuban antiaircraft, would JFK's "toughness" have brought about a Khrushchev back-down, even combined with JFK's "moderation" and willingness to compromise.

All of the known elements of JFK's strategy were relevant to the outcome, but not one, nor all of them together, was critical or determinative.

And neither side knew of nuclear winter, the very likely result of the war that would have resulted from accurate Cuban AA against low-level US recon aircraft on Sunday morning, if K had not started dismantling the missiles at 4 AM. That is, neither knew that what was at stake was the likely extermination of most animal life in the Northern Hemisphere, and possibly on the planet.

Saturday, October 8, 2011: Yet, without knowing this, both did speak frequently, privately, of “mankind, the whole world, future generations” being at stake. Neither wanted to take a large risk of this; yet both did take what they saw as a small risks of it (risks that were indeed real, not zero, and were in fact larger than they realized.)

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advice to give one's children; that challenge, that possibility; vs. McNamara “values”, feudal values (non-Const); “what can we do?”; risks and courage; Speer rule; my self-criticism; see my hawkishness in C-II, and wrong bases;

JFK and K in C-II;

How it ended, vs. other explanations; what didn't win or end it; what didn't make a difference;

Monday, October 10, 2011